

A
TRUE CHURCHMAN'S
REASONS

For Repealing the
Corporation *and* Test-Acts,

As they now stand a necessary Qualification for
Civil and Military OFFICES.

With an humble
PROPOSAL

For making
A proper Test in the room thereof.

In a LETTER to a Member of Parliament.

L O N D O N :

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1896-1899



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S I R,

IN Compliance with your Request in yours of the 13th Instant, I have under-written given you my deliberate-Thoughts on our Brethren the Protestant-Dissenters, who, you tell me, are endeavouring now to obtain a Repeal of the Acts above-mentioned, which I shall give you with the utmost Plainness, Freedom, and Sincerity,

and as fully as my other Affairs and this short Letter will allow me to do it ; and as one that considers, and ought to remember, that my advanced Age will soon bring me to give an Account (among all my other Actions) for what I now say to you, and that before the most righteous Judge of the World.

I need not spend a great deal of Time to remind you of the narrow Views of those who got those Acts pass'd, nor of the dreadful Consequences of the vile Profanation of the highest and most sacred Institution of the only Son of God, and the only innocent Son of Man ; who commanded, that till he comes to judge the World, it should be done (not as a Qualification for a Civil or Military Office) but in remembrance of him, and of what he did and suffered for us : In which solemn Remembrance is necessarily implied, and required of us, the strongest Love, the greatest Gratitude, and the most exact Obedience to our glorious Redeemer, and to all his Commands, that
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we are capable of. Now, my Friend, can you suppose that our great Lord and Saviour ever intended that this high and most solemn Feast with himself, should be laid in common to his declared Enemies, as well as to his professed Friends.

You tell me *Judas*, that betray'd him, was one who received the Sacrament with the other Eleven; which Eleven were our Lord's profess'd and real Friends: I answer, I grant you that, and more, even that *Judas* at the same Time was known by our Lord, (who, as he was God, knew all Things) to be his Enemy. But it is plain, by the solicitous Examination that the Disciples made of themselves, upon our Lord's assuring them, that one of them would betray him; that *Judas Iscariot* was a profess'd Lover of his Lord, whom he knew, by his astonishing Miracles, by his holy Life, and heavenly Doctrines, was God and Man, and, in that Capacity, came [to pay a most perfect Obedience for us to the Laws of Heaven,

which the first *Adam*, and all his Race then in him, had rebelliously broken; and to lay down his Life for all that ever had, did then, or should thereafter believe on, and accept of him, as their liege Lord and Sovereign. In all Probability, if *Judas's* Villainy and Hypocrisy had been known to the *Eleven*, (as it certainly was to our Lord) *Peter* and the rest would have endeavoured to have defeated his Intention of betraying him: But then how would that Prophecy of him be fulfilled, that his own profess'd and familiar Friend should lift up his Heel against him? And how could his being betray'd by a profess'd Friend be such a Part of his Humiliation for us, as was before-hand told us was to be a Mark of his being the true Messiah? Who, though his Heel was to be bruised by the old Serpent, yet was he to break the Devil's Head or Power, and so gloriously and triumphantly to deliver, by his Life and Death, all that believe on him, and accept of him as their King;

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out of Satan's Kingdom, and to restore them to the Favour of God, and put them into a much happier and securer State for ever, than they would have been, if their first Father and common Representative had never joined with the apostate Angels in rebelling against Heaven. Tho' I do not believe that infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, could ever be at a Loss to find out a Way to save a rebellious World, (with a Salvo to his own Justice, which had declared, that Man should die if he rebell'd) yet since the offended Majesty of Heaven thought fit to take this Method, and to accept of an Equivalent, that he might honourably save us, I cannot help believing that it was the best way that even infinite and united Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, could contrive, most expressive of his Love to his Enemies, who had once borne the Image of their Maker, and the most likely Method to turn our fix'd Enmity of God into Love, Admiration, and Gratitude. The Almighty
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himself seems to speak thus when he says, *What could I have done more than I have done?* But did any of the Apostles of our Lord ever encourage or force openly profane Swearers, Drunkards, Whoremongers, Lyars, covetous Persons, (or Idolaters) and the like, to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Are not all such declared to be Children of the Devil? Do not such as are thus openly wicked carry the Mark of the Devil in their Foreheads? And did ever Christ, or his Apostles, make the Table of the Lord the Table of Devils? Did the greatest King that ever was on Earth, the King of Kings, ever make a Law, that if *Judas* would not partake with him of that his Supper, he should no longer hold his Office of Treasurer? No! far from it; even *Judas's* then eating and drinking with our Lord and his Disciples, were (in him) voluntary Actions, though foreseen by the God that made him, and whom he betray'd: And having no Test-Act to extenuate his Crime,

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his Wickedness was the greater, in betraying his very best Friend with a Kiss ; for he made the same Profession of Love, Gratitude, and Obedience, that the Eleven did. If you will but seriously and impartially consider this Thing, I am sure you will conclude (as I have done for many Years) that the prostituting the most solemn and sacred Supper of our Lord to secure Places of Profit or Honour, to those who, though ever so notoriously wicked, will (by complying with the said Act) intitle themselves to be called Church-men, is a high Affront to God, and a foul Blot upon any Christian Church that encourages such a Corruption; of which Church I profess myself an unworthy Member : But one that mourns for all our Imperfections, and would rejoice to see all Christian-Churches firmly established and flourish; upon the Doctrines and Practices of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself (and no other) being the chief Corner Stone. I hope our Stability will never depend on

the Prostitution of the most sacred Institution of our Lord, to serve secular and unjustifiable Purposes. But you suggest, that you believe the Protestant-Dissenters, in their present Endeavours, (or at least many of them) are not so much aiming at the Honour of their and our great Lord and Master, and at removing this Blemish from our Church, as at being capable of having Civil and Military Offices. And you seem to fear, that if the King's Hands should be untied, and he should have Liberty to employ as Officers Protestant-Dissenters, as well as Churchmen, (as all our Kings ever, by the aforesaid Acts, have had to employ a few of them in the Navy) that, generally speaking, they being (in Appearance at least) soberer Men than the generality of our Officers that pass for Churchmen, by receiving the Sacrament as the said Test-Acts require, though they are seldom to be seen in a Church at other Times, it will put very great Difficulties on many who are of our Church : They must either make
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great Friends, and grow sober and diligent, which is not very agreeable to many of them, or they cannot get into an Employment so easily as they can, now there are fewer Competitors ; I have observed (you say) by many of us, who have Liberty to employ what Servants we please, that we choose to trust a Protestant-Dissenter, that we are well assured is an honest, sober, diligent Man, rather than one who cannot have such a Recommendation, though he tells us he is a true Churchman : And they are frequently chosen as Constables, yea, as Wardens of our Churches, or any other troublesome Office, provided it has no Profit attending it.

To this I reply, that I will not answer for all the Dissenters ; that their chief Views are at the Honour of our Redeemer, and at the removing of a Blemish in our Church. It is probable many of them aim chiefly at being upon a Level with us in Civil and Military Affairs ; and, for my own Part, I cannot see any

Reason to depress them. They agree with us in all the Substantials of our holy Religion; and as to lesser and indifferent Things, that we all agree are so in themselves, I wish to God they were left so in their Use, and that none would take on them to lord it over God's Heritage. They are as good Friends to King *George*, and his faithful Ministers of State, as you or I, or the best Churchmen can be; and they are the only Friends that the true Church of *England* have, and can depend on. We all profess we are journeying towards Heaven; why then should we fall out by the Way? Is it any detriment to us to have our truest Friends able to assist us with their Persons and Purse? Do they not readily join us in all Elections, when our civil and religious Rights depend on such Elections? Did they not stand firmly by us in our greatest Distresses, when Popery, Slavery, and all sorts of Debauchery, threaten'd to invade and destroy us, and our Religion? Did we not then promise, in our Danger, that

that we would come to a Temper with them? And what have we ever done for them, except giving them Leave to worship God in the manner that they believe in their Consciences is most pleasing to Him; which is giving them nothing but what their Lord and ours had given them before: For, as they always preach'd Jesus Christ, and him crucified, though they did not follow us, our passionate Predecessors err'd as much in silencing and persecuting them, as our Lord's Disciples did, who were for silencing and ejecting all who cast out Devils in his Name, only because they did not follow them. If the Dissenters, in their Turns, have been guilty of the same Fault towards us, their Faults will not excuse us in continuing to do that which we own was a Fault in them: For their Lord and ours has strictly commanded us to do by all Men (not as we are done by) but as we would be done by; to love one another, as we love our selves, and as he loved us, and by his great Apostle *Paul*,
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to give no Occasion of Offence ; to lay no Stumbling-Blocks in the Way of our Brethren : If we are strong, not to offend our weak Brethren, even by eating of Meat ; though that is a Thing undoubtedly lawful in it self, much less have we any Power to force our doubting weak Brethren to eat Meat, which they scruple, or cannot digest, or to abstain from it, when they think it lawful and expedient ; or to make such Things Terms of Communion with us, which our Lord and Master has not made so, as the Church of *Rome* take upon them to do by the Laity. Woe be to any that shall add to his Words ; I mean, that shall lay any Strefs, or occasion any Schism, by their own Additions, or weak and doubtful Illustrations or Explanations of God's Laws. Our blessed Lord, and his Apostles, never refused to own any as Members of the visible Christian-Church, who repented of their Sins, and profess'd their Belief on him, as the great Messiah ; and such and their Families were baptized in
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the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : And dare we cast such out of our Church whom God has received and owned ? Let the Enemies of Christianity unchurch them if they please ; for my Part I never will, but will always endeavour to do by them as I would have them do to me. But you ask me how shall the State be secure ? And shall we not endanger the Protestant Interest if we lay aside this Sacramental Test, and so put *Papists, Atheists, Deists, Muggletonians, Antinomians, Arians, Socinians, French* (or false) Prophets, and the like Enemies to Christianity, into Places of Power and Profit. I answer, much better than the Government or the Church are now secured against them, by preferring none but such, as produce a Certificate, signed by one of the Ministers and three or four principal and noted worthy Members of the Church or Congregation of which he is a Member, (without Fee, Gratuity, or Reward) testifying that such Person is a profess'd Protestant,

testant, and attends the Worship of God in such particular Protestant-Congregation when in Health, and his Affairs do not call him Abroad; that they believe him to be a good Protestant, and a sober, diligent, religious, and honest Man. A severe Penalty may be laid on the counterfeiting and altering such Certificates; and also on any that shall subscribe any of them, whereby they give any Person a Character contrary to what they know such Person deserves. Such a Method as this would soon empty our Taverns, Ale-houses, Brandy-shops, and Fields, and fill our Churches and Protestant Congregations on *Sundays*, and other Days, when our Maker is to be worshipped: And many a poor Wretch, that now never goes into a Church, but to get or keep his Qualification, may, while he is seeking for Loaves and Fishes, be caught in a Net, which our Lord has commanded to be spread for Men. And, in a little Time, our Armies and Navies would not be terrible to sober religious Men,

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as they have been for many Years last past, by reason of the most horrible, execrable, and new-invented Oaths, Curses, Imprecations, and other Abominations, that are now heard and seen in our Armies, Navies, Cities, Towns, Countries, Villages, Rivers, &c. where Wickedness is generally and very easily learnt, by the Examples of Men in Power and Authority. This Repeal (in all Probability) will sooner reform the Manners of such as have any Hopes of ever being more than what they now are, or that would not be always Servants, than a thousand Reformation-Sermons; while there is nothing more required to qualify a Man for an Office, than his receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper three or four times a Year, whether he be fit for it or not. If he neglects, he must lose his Place, and be put under other very severe Penalties. If he eats and drinks unworthily, not discerning the Lord's Body, he eats and drinks Damnation to himself: And if a poor Minister, that knows the Officer that of-

fers to receive it is a Devil, or a Child and Slave of the Devil's, and trembles at the Thought of profaning the Lord's Table by admitting him, should dare to refuse him, while in this deplorable Condition; this poor Minister (as the Law stands at present) may be ruined by such refused Officer: Therefore whatever Views some may have in reforming what is amiss, it can never be too soon to amend whatever dishonours God, and the holy Religion he has instituted, and which we profess.

As to the last Question you ask me, *viz.* Whether I think this is a proper Time to address for an Amendment of this Law, which has kept so many out of our Churches, and embitter'd their Spirits against us for treating them, as we should not like to be treated by them, if the Tables were turn'd. I answer, That in my Conscience I think it a proper, and the most proper Time, for the following Reasons.

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1. That none but the present Time can properly be called our own : The Time past is not, nor will it ever be ours again ; the future is not, and never may be ours : And we are commanded to work while it is day ; and whatever our Hands find us to do, to do it with all our Might.

2. We have now a most excellent King on the Throne, and, blessed be God, he is happy in a faithful Ministry : And it must certainly be a very pleasant Thing to him to make all his dutiful and loving Subjects easy, by bestowing Favours with an impartial Hand to those who equally, or most, deserve them, and are fittest for them. And we have no Reason to doubt that such a Prince will, with Pleasure, strengthen the Hands of his truest Friends of the established Church, who have been found, ever since the happy Revolution, to be too powerful for all his Majesty's Enemies among us, (though very numerous and mighty too) when we are joined by the Hearts, Purses,

Counsels, and Hands of our Protestant Dissenting Friends. We are not so vain as to imagine that we, who are his Majesty's best Friends of the establish'd Church, are (by our selves) numerous, rich, and strong enough to gain a Majority of hearty Friends to his Majesty, in our approaching Elections, if our Enemies have Art enough to breed a Misunderstanding between us, by making our only Friends believe, that we of the established Church, who are true Friends to his Majesty, would fain continue the greatest Blemish in our Church, on purpose to keep them out of their natural and civil Rights, who chearfully and equally contribute, by their Persons, Purfes, and Labours with us, to support that happy Establishment in the State, that God has blessed us with, and to render his sacred Majesty easy in the Administration of Justice. And therefore, if we had no other Motive, but our own true Interest and Preservation, we ought to do our utmost to enable and oblige our

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Brethren, the Protestant-Dissenters, to join us in our common Defence against our common Enemies, which I have before named. I wish there were no other Names or Distinctions among Christians than that of Protestants and Papists ; but then there would not be so many Exercises for Charity or Love, and mutual Forbearance, as there are : And if we have not those Graces, and shew (on all proper Occasions) that we have them, whatever we call our selves, and whatever other Angelick Qualifications we may be possessed of, we are nothing, but as sounding Brasses, or a tinkling Cymbal.

I believe, there is not a true Churchman in *Great Britain*, either Clergyman or Layman, that soberly considers the Mischief and Dishonour the Misconstruction (or Misapplication) of the said Test-Act has done, and will do, to the Church of *England*, but heartily wishes (as I do) that it were restrain'd to what was said to be the true Intention of it, when first enacted ; (or rather exchanged for a
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much better Test; whereby no Man will be allowed to Witness for himself, as he does by the present Test) I mean, to keep out of Places of Trust and Profit, only those who are Enemies to the Protestant Religion.



POSTSCRIPT.

BEFORE any of my Brethren or Adversaries undertake to reply to what I have said on this Subject, I desire they will duly consider and answer the following Queries.

1. Is our almighty Saviour (the Lord Jesus Christ) supreme Head of his Church, or not?
2. Will he at last most righteously judge the World in his united Nature, as true God and true Man, and punish all the obstinate Transgressors of his Laws, or no?
3. Has he Wisdom and Authority sufficient to institute Ordinances and Sacraments in his Church, and to declare the

sacred Ends for which he institutes them; or does he stand in need of the Assistance of any mere Creature, to add any Thing to his Appointments, or Designs, and to make those, their Additions, essential thereto.

4. Will he not severely reprove, and add all the Plagues that are written in the Book of God, to them that shall add any Thing of their own to his Word?

5. Has not our Lord, in his last Supper, told us the End of our sacramental eating and drinking his Body and Blood, *viz.* that we are to do it in Remembrance of him?

6. If we receive that Sacrament once, twice, thrice, or oftner, in a Year, to qualify us for any Civil or Military Employment, or to save 500 *l.* that may otherwise (if we have it) be torn from us, for any one Omission, and to preserve our natural and civil Rights, of being capable of suing for our just Dues, of receiving and enjoying a Legacy, and the like. Are not these additional Ends to the

the only End our Lord has told us we ought to regard, when we come to eat and drink with him at his Table? Or can it be a sufficient Excuse to tell the great Judge of the World, in the last Day, that notwithstanding we made bold to prostitute his Institutions to serve our secular Purposes, when Men commanded us so to do, yet we did not wholly forget him at such Times, though we cannot deny but that the chief Design we then had was to serve our temporal Interests?

7. Is it not persecuting the Ministers of our own established Church, to compel them to administer that holy Sacrament to such as they know are unfit or (if left to their Liberty) unwilling to receive it, by such Penalties as they are not able to bear; which Penalties the Person refused has always in his Power, by the Test-Acts, to bring them under, to the utter Ruin of the conscientious Ministers and their Families?

8. Is it not too severe upon our Civil and Military Officers, to subject them to
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utter Ruin, if they happen to forget receiving the Sacrament so often as the Test-Acts require? Or if they, for want of their Pay in due Time, have not Money to satisfy two Witnesses, who must be able to testify their receiving it, as often as the said Acts require?

9. Did the Corporation and Test-Acts ever preserve our established Church from the Dangers and Invasions we were threaten'd with, by a Popish King and a Popish Pretender?

10. Can it be supposed that a Papist, who knows the Pope will sell him Pardons for any Sins, especially if they are committed to serve Holy-Church, will make any Scruple to receive the Sacrament in our established Churches three or four times every Year, if he can but thereby secure to himself a profitable Office, and be skreened from utter Ruin by Informations and Prosecutions on the Acts before mentioned?

11. If the Corporation and Test-Acts are not Grievances to those who have no

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more than the bare Name of Churchmen, and desire no more than the Name; are they not very great Grievances and Persecutions to every conscientious Member of the Church of *England*, that has always been a constant and worthy Communicant at the Table of our Lord, and is, in all respects, fitly qualified to serve his King and Country in some Civil or Military Employment or other, but dares not accept of any publick Office, because he thinks in his Conscience (as I do) that he would sin against God if he should receive it for any other End than what our great Lord has appointed, *viz.* in Remembrance of him; much more if his secular End should eclipse or annihilate the sacred and only End our Lord had in that solemn and sacred Institution?

12. Whether those Members of our own established Church, who have (since the Corporation and Test-Acts were in Being) accepted of Civil or Military Employments, and till such their Acceptance, were constant Communicants in our Church,

Church, and received the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper, only in Remembrance of him, but to keep such their Offices, and to preserve themselves and Families from utter Ruin, have been overcome (contrary to their Judgments) to receive the Sacrament three or four times a Year, in Obedience to the said Acts, as well as in Remembrance of their Lord; and, while they have been so receiving, have doubted that they offended God, by prostituting the most sacred Things to secular and common Uses: I say, would they not (if they had any Fear of God before their Eyes) have rejoiced, in being delivered from such Temptations and Snares, as those Acts were to them?

For my own Part, I always thought, that in the Worship of God, whatsoever I do, if I believe I ought not to do it, it is a Sin in me; and that if I do that, which I do but doubt is a Sin, I expose my self to Damnation.

Read what Bishop *Hoadly* has writ on
 this Subject: Read what the great Apo-
 file *Paul* has writ on this Head: Read
 the Corporation and Test-Acts: And
 read some Considerations on repealing
 the Test-Act, printed in the Year 1732.

F I N I S.

